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NFAC 5573-78

8 December 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Bowie

SUBJECT: Comments on "Planning for Intelligence Assessment on the Resurgence of Islam"

1. This responds to your 6 December request for our comments on the subject ORPA memorandum (NFAC 5430-78), 30 November 1978.

2. We strongly agree that a new intelligence assessment of the implications of Islamic resurgence should be undertaken. We believe it is urgent and important.

3. We have three problems with the proposal the planning memorandum outlines:

a) Concept. From the materials at hand, neither the purpose nor the aim of the study is clear. Is it to be a handbook of reference materials on Islam, a set of country studies, or an issues-related analysis? Is its approach historical, descriptive, or estimative? Is it viewed as a reference aid for Islamic analysts around town, a vehicle for pulling the Community together for a new Islamic focus, or as a framework of intelligence analysis for decision-making? We doubt that a single paper can serve each of these purposes; attempts to try may miss all of them. We believe that the paper should be primarily a framework for intelligence analysis for decision-makers.

b) Timing. Given current perspectives in the Middle East, South Asia, and the Gulf, we think the study's proposed pace--four months to first redraft--too methodical and possibly insensitive to policymaker concerns.

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c) Methodology. We appreciate that there may be need for country-by-country, or building block, analyses in some new depth. We concur with ORPA's proposal that these be done in a coordinated mode. But we suspect the country section approach fitted to an introductory "analytic overview" containing "findings and conclusions" may be too flat and one-dimensional.

4. If this longer research effort is to be launched as envisioned, we suggest the methodological minimum of a matrix analysis which would identify, describe, and project the several principal Islamic sects or variations on one axis and the country/regional chapters on the other. An exclusively country chapter approach may obscure both the transnational connections of the Islamic sects and their influence on the animosities and ambitions of the various sub-national ethnic groups in the region.

5. But whether or not the long-range study is undertaken, we think there is also need now for an assessment/estimate which would pull together for policymakers--on the basis of materials and expertise at hand--the best judgments available on probable scale, contagion, and significance of Islamic resurgence for US interests. The estimate--perhaps an SNIE done under priority procedures--could be identified as preliminary and could signal the longer research effort under way. We believe an essential service to policymakers requires us at least to try to provide some new frame of reference for coping with the implications Islamic revival holds for our security interests, our energy supplies, the international payments and monetary system, and for Soviet exploitation or vulnerability. You may not be able to approve the product of this effort, when completed. But we believe it should be attempted. And there is always the possibility that it may be requested with even less notice.

5. The proposal at hand, in our view, does not serve the latter purpose.

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William Leonhart

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5430-78

D/ORPA-78-1560

30 November 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, National Foreign Assessment Center

THROUGH : Director, Regional and Political Analysis

FROM : [redacted] 25X1
Acting Chief, Middle East Division, ORPA

SUBJECT : Planning for Intelligence Assessment on the resurgence of Islam

In response to your request of 22 November, following is a proposal for the production of an Intelligence Assessment dealing with the Islamic resurgence and its implications.

Some Thoughts on Contents

We envision the Intelligence Assessment being comprised of an analytic chapter and country/regional chapters covering Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya, the remainder of the Arab world, West Africa, and South-Southeast Asia. We might also wish to treat the Soviet Union's Muslim community in another chapter.

It is obvious that the role of Islam and the influence and tactics of Muslim groups in the several countries cited above are poles apart. Nevertheless, the authors of the country chapters should work from a common outline. They would, of course, have the freedom to spell out and analyze the unique role of Islam in the politics of their country.

At this point we probably do not need a full-blown draft of a terms of reference, but some of the points we should address in the Intelligence Assessment are spelled out below:

1. Journalists have flatly stated that "A wave of Islamic foundamentalism is sweeping the Muslim world from Indonesia to Senegal." Too often these observers

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have failed to emphasize the distinctive experiences being undergone by these countries. Certainly the role of Islam in Saudi Arabia is starkly different than it is in Turkey or Iran, for example, and our assessment must make this point.

2. Another distinction of which we must be aware is that between ~~that of~~ the Islamic clergy on the one hand, and pragmatic politicians who latch on to Islam, seeing in it a vehicle for gaining power. Within the clergy, there are further distinctions between those who are seeking a continuing role in political-decision making and those who are primarily concerned with re-structuring some aspects of the value system of the society.

3. Some observers have suggested that the new vitality of Islamic groups around the world should be written off as coincidental. The Intelligence Assessment should address the possible role of Libya, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in sponsoring Islamic movements.

4. We should also evaluate the validity of various explanations for the behavior we have observed. Some of the more common explanations for the revival of Islam as a political force are:

--that it is a consequence of disillusionment with that series of things we shorthand as modernization and westernization;

--that it results from a deep split between the "official culture" of the governing elite and the "popular culture" of the masses;

--that Islam is an alternative channel for the expression of what are basically socio-economic grievances for which there is no direct route to the establishment.

Finally, we must address the implications of the Islamic revival for the country in question, for the US, and for the international system. In addition to obvious considerations, we should think about the impact of a revived Islam on Israel,

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on stability of world oil supplies, on the international business system through the investment portfolios held by Islamic oil producers, and on the non-Muslim minorities in Islamic states.

Outside Help

Outside academic assistance would be very valuable during at least two phases of the process. It would probably be wise, however, to avoid both the "pure" Islamic scholars--who often get bogged down in debate over ninth century Muslim dogmatics--and the many political scientists with a Middle Eastern speciality who usually want to focus on things Arab-Israeli. The sorts of people who would be most helpful include:

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Short biographics of the above-named academicians are attached.

Steps in the Production Process

1. A planning conference should be held; it would be attended by appropriate NFAC country analysts, NIOs, and invited experts. The conference would review a short terms of reference draft prepared in the Agency, information and viewpoints would be shared, open-source literature identified and evaluated, gaps in our knowledge identified, and alternative hypotheses for the Islamic revival explored. The conference would also provide us with a better background to draft questions to be sent to collectors in the field.

2. While collectors are getting information, NFAC analysts will review existing intelligence reporting and open-source literature.

3. NFAC analysts would draft the country chapters.

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4. The analytic overview containing our findings and conclusions would be prepared. This would be the first chapter of the draft Intelligence Assessment.

5. A conference to review and critique the draft Intelligence Assessment would be held. It would be attended by NFAC analysts, NIO, NFAC leaders, and invited experts. (The invitees could be those attending the planning session, a different groups of outsiders, or a mix.)

6. Redrafting of the Intelligence Assessment as a result of the review conference.

We estimate that for Step 1 through Step 6, we should allow at least four months.

The planning and review conferences should be held in a facility--such as the [redacted]--in the Washington, D.C. area where the outsiders could be housed. 25X1

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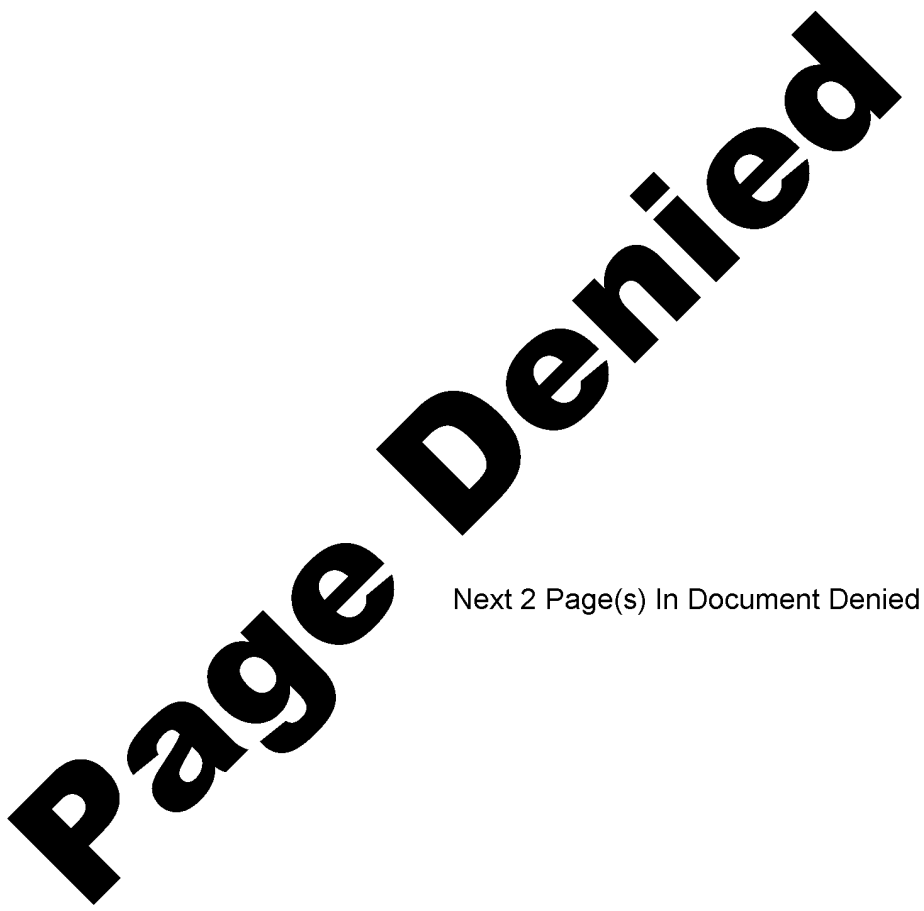

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